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The Man From Brodne's

By GEORGE BARR M'CUTCHEON

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(Continued.)

"They say these Americans are wonderful people, my lord," ventured Mr. Bowles. "I dare say when Mr. and Mrs. Browne arrive they'll have some way of—"

"Browne" cried her ladyship. "This very evening I shall give orders concerning the rooms they are to occupy. I suppose, however, that the rooms we have taken are the best?"

"The choicest, my lady," said Bowles, bowing.

"See here, Mr.—er—old chap, don't you think you can induce the servants to come back to us? By Jove, I'll make it worth your while."

"What are we to do?" wailed Lady Agnes, sitting down suddenly upon the edge of a fountain.

"You see, my lady, they take the position that you have no right here," volunteered Bowles. "They've got the ridiculous idea into their noddies that you can't be the heiress unless Lord Deppingham passes away inside of a year, and—"

"I'm — if I do!" roared the perspiring obstacle. "I'm not so obliging as that, let me tell you. If it comes to that, what sort of ass do they think I'd be to come away out here to pass away? London's good enough for any man to die in."

"You are not going to die, Deppy," said his wife consolingly, "unless you starve to death," she supplemented, with an expressive moue.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BROWNES ARRIVE.

CONTRARY to all expectations, the Browns arrived the next morning. The Deppinghams and their miserably frightened servants were scarcely out of bed when Saunders came in with the news that a steamer was standing off the shallow harbor. Bowles had telephoned up that the American claimant was on board.

The deepest gloom pervaded the household when Lady Deppingham discovered that not one of their retainers knew how to make coffee or broil bacon—not that she cared for bacon, but that his lordship always asked for it when they did not have it.

Bromley upset the last peg of endurance by hoping that the Americans were bringing a cook and a housemaid with them.

"The Americans always travel like lords," she concluded, forgetting that she served a lord and not in the least intending to be ironical.

"That will do, Bromley," said her mistress sharply. "If they're like most Americans I've seen they'll have nothing but wet nurses and chauffeurs. I can't eat this vile stuff. Come on, Deppy. Let's go up and watch the approach of the enemy."

Scarcely half an hour passed before the advance guard of the Browne company came into view at the park gates below. Deppingham recalled the fact that an hour and a half had been consumed in the accomplishment yesterday. He was keeping a sharp lookout for the magic red jacket and the Tommy Atkins hat. Quite secure from observation, he and his wife watched the forerunners with the hand bags; then came the sweating trunk bearers and then crated objects in—what? Yes, by the Lord Harry, in the very carts that had been their private chariots the day before!

Deppingham's wrath did not really explode until the two were gazing open mouthed upon Robert Browne and his wife and his maid-servants and his ass, for that was the name which his lordship subsequently applied, with no moderation, to the unfortunate gentleman who served as Mr. Browne's attorney. The Americans were being swiftly, cozily carried to their new home in litters of oriental comfort and elegance, fanned vigorously from both sides by eager boys. First came the Brownes, eager faced, bright eyed, alert young people, far better looking than their new enemies could conscientiously admit under the circumstances; then the lawyer from the States; then a pert young lady in a pink shirt waist and a sailor hat; then two giggling, utterly un-English maids, and all of them lollying in luxurious ease. The red jacket was conspicuously absent.

It is not to be wondered at that his lordship looked at his wife, gulped in sympathy and then said something memorable.

Almost before they could realize what had happened the newcomers were chattering in the spacious halls below, tramping about the rooms and giving orders in high, though apparently efficacious voices. Close at their heels trooped the servants, all of whom took part in the discussion incident to fresh discoveries. At last they came upon the great balcony, pausing just outside the French windows to exclaim anew in their delight. "Great!" said the lawyer man after a full minute. "Finest I've ever seen! Isn't it a picture, Browne?"

"Glorious!" said young Mr. Browne, taking a long breath. The Deppinghams, sitting unobserved, saw that he was a tall, good looking fellow. They were unconsciously amused when he suddenly reached out and took his wife's hand in his big fingers. She was very trim and cool looking in her white duck.

"What does Baedeker say about it, Bobby?" asked Mrs. Browne. Her voice was very soft and full—the quiet, well modulated Boston voice and manner.

The pert girl in the pink waist opened a small portfolio, while the others gathered around her. She read therefrom. The lawyer drew a compass from his pocket and pointed vaguely into what proved to be the southwest.

"We must tell Lady Deppingham not to take the rooms at this end," was the next thing that the listeners heard from Mrs. Browne's lips. Her ladyship turned upon her husband with a triumphant sniff.

"What did I tell you," she whispered. "I knew they'd want the best of everything. Isn't it lucky I pounced upon these rooms? They shan't turn us out. You won't let 'em, will you, Deppy?"

"The impudence of 'em" was all that Deppy could sputter.

At that moment the American party caught sight of the pair in the corner. For a brief space of time the two parties stared at each other very much as the hunter and the hunted look when they come face to face without previous warning. Then a friendly, half abashed smile lighted Browne's face.

"I beg your pardon," said Browne.

"Y-as," drawled Deppy, with a look which was meant to convey the impression that he did not know who the deuce he was addressing.

"Permit me to introduce myself. I am Robert Browne."

"Oh," said Deppy, as if that did not convey anything to him. Then, as an afterthought, "Glad to know you, I'm sure."

Still he did not rise, nor did he extend his hand. For a moment young Browne waited, a dull red growing in his temples.

"Don't you intend to present me to Lady Deppingham?" he demanded bluntly without taking his eyes from Deppy's face.

"Oh—er—is that neces"—

"Lady Deppingham," interrupted Browne, "I am Robert Browne, the man you are expected to marry. We are here for the same purpose, I suspect. We can't be married to each other. That's out of the question. But we can live together as if we—"

"Good Lord!" roared Deppy, coming to his feet in a towering rage. Browne smiled apologetically and lifted his hand.

"As if we were serving out the prescribed period of courtship set down in the will. Believe me, I am very happily married, as I hope you are. The courtship, you will perceive, is neither here nor there. Our every issue is identical, Lady Deppingham. Doesn't it strike you that we will be very foolish if we stand alone and against each other?"

"My solicitor"—began Lady Deppingham and then stopped. She was smiling in spite of herself.

"Your solicitor and mine can get together and talk it over," said Browne blandly. "We'll leave it to them. I am quite ready to be a friendly ally, not a foe."

"Let me understand you," began Deppingham, cooling off suddenly. "Do you mean to say that you are not going to fight us in this matter?"

"Not at all, your lordship," said Browne coolly. "I am here to fight Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme, deceased. I think both of us will run no risk if we smash the will. If we don't smash it the islanders will cheerfully take the legacy off our hands."

"By Jove!" muttered Deppy, looking at his wife.

"Thank you, Mr. Browne, for being so frank with us," she said coolly. "If you don't mind, I will consult my solicitor." She bowed ever so slightly, indicating that the interview was at an end and, moreover, that it had not been of her choosing.

"Any time, your ladyship," said Browne, also bowing. "I think Mrs. Browne wants to speak to you about the rooms."

"We are quite settled, Mr. Browne, and very well satisfied," she said pointedly, turning red with a fresh touch of anger.

"I trust you have not taken the rooms at this end."

"I'm sorry," said Browne. "We were warned not to take them. They are said to be unbearable when the hot winds come in October."

"What's that?" demanded Deppingham.

"The book of instructions, and description which we have secured sets all that out," said the other. "It's strange that the servants didn't warn you."

"The—the confounded servants left us yesterday before we came, every mother's son of 'em. There isn't a servant on the place."

"What? You don't mean it? I say, Britt, come here a moment, will you? Lord Deppingham says the servants have struck."

The American lawyer, a chubby, red faced man of forty, with clear gray eyes and a stubby mustache, whistled softly.

"I'll see what I can do, Mr. Browne. Got to have cooks, eh, Lord Deppingham?" Without waiting for an answer he dashed off. The native carriers were leaving the grounds when Britt's shrill whistle brought them to a standstill. The lawyer waved a triumphant hand to his friends and then climbed into one of the litters to be borne off in the direction of the town.

"He'll have the servants back at work before 2 o'clock," said Browne

calmly. Deppingham was transfixed with astonishment.

"How—how the devil do you—does he bring 'em to time like that?" he murmured. He afterward said that if

he had had Saunders there at that humiliating moment he would have kicked him.

"They're afraid of the American battleship," said Browne.

"But where is the American battleship?" demanded Deppingham, looking wildly to sea.

"They understand that there will be one here in a day or two if we need it," said Browne, with a sly grin. "That's the bluff we've worked." He looked around for his wife and, finding that she had gone inside, politely waved his hand to the Englishman and followed.

At 3 o'clock Britt returned with the recalcitrant servants—or at least the "pick" of them, as he termed the score he had chosen from the duned or more. He seemed to have an Aladdin-like effect over the horde.

Calmly taking Lord Deppingham and his following into his confidence, he said, in reply to their indignant remonstrances, later on in the day:

"I know that an American man-of-war hasn't any right to fire upon British possessions, but you just keep quiet and let well enough alone. They just simply know that I can send wireless messages and that a cruiser would be out there tomorrow if necessary, pegging away at these green hills with cannon balls so big that there wouldn't be anything left but the horizon in an hour or two. You let me do the talking. I've got 'em bluffed, and I'll keep 'em that way."

Over in the gorgeous west wing Lord Deppingham later on tried to convince his sulky little wife that the Americans were an amazing lot, after all. Bromley tapped at the door.

"Tea is served in the hanging garden, my lady," she announced. Her mistress looked up in surprise, red eyed and a bit disheveled.

"Ask some one to bring the tea things in here, Bromley," she said sternly. "Besides, I want to give some orders. We must have system here, not Americans'."

The tea things did not come in. In their stead came pretty Mrs. Browne.

(To be Continued.)

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